17. XVI. 22.

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE DEACON'S OFFICE, AND THE DUTY OF CHURCHES TOWARDS SUCH OFFICERS.

THE

CIRCULAR LETTER

OF THE

MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS

OF THE

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE

ASSOCIATION OF BAPTIST CHURCHES,

ASSEMBLED AT MANCHESTER,

ON

TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9th AND 10th, 1835,

MAINTAINING THE IMPORTANT DOCTRINES OF

THREE EQUAL PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD; ETERNAL AND PERSONAL ELECTION; ORIGINAL SIN; PARTICULAR REDEMPTION; FREE JUSTIFICATION BY THE IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST; EFFICACIOUS GRACE IN REGENERATION; THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF REAL BELIEVERS; THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD; THE ETERNAL HAPPINESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS; AND THE EVERLASTING MISERY OF THE WICKED; TOGETHER WITH THE CONGREGATIONAL ORDER OF THE CHURCHES;

TO THE MEMBERS OF THOSE SEVERAL CHURCHES.

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BRADFORD:

E. KEIGHLEY, PRINTER, 61, KIRKGATE.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

Dear Brethren,

The subject which, at your last annual meeting, you chose by your representatives for the address of this year, was "*The nature and the extent of the deacon's office, and the duty of churches towards such officers.*" To this, therefore, we now affectionately intreat your attention. We are aware that such a topic does not involve the great essential truths of the gospel, nor does it possess that kind of interest which belongs to those points of Christian experience to which all must be alive, who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious;" yet we cannot deem it a matter of mere speculation or of useless discussion. It has, we conceive, a practical bearing, intimately connected with the interests of Christianity, and with the peace, the order, and the prosperity of our churches. None who have just views of the supreme authority of the great Head of the Church, the wisdom of the inspired apostles, and the sufficiency of the sacred writings as our guide in all things that pertain to the kingdom of Christ, can be indifferent, without great inconsistency, to the exemplar of church government which the New Testament affords. We have no conception of improving on divine ordinances by human wisdom, nor of the competency of any succeeding age, to devise a better mode of working the apparatus of evangelical means, for maintaining and extending the religion of Christ among men.

It must be remembered, brethren, not only that the world is to be evangelized by the church of Christ, that is, by the whole body of believers, under all the various modifications which Christianity may assume, but that it is by distinct communities of Christians blending their efforts and uniting their strength, that the truth of the gospel is to be maintained, and its sacred blessings generally diffused. They are "the golden candlesticks," by which the "light of life" is to be supported and elevated, and from which its rays are to be shed over the tracts of surrounding darkness. It is of importance, then, that Christian communities should possess, in their constitution and government and mode of action, the highest possible adaptation to the objects which they are to accomplish; and does not this adaptation depend, in a great

measure, on their conformity to the scripture pattern? Is it, then, of small consequence, whether our churches in their officers, and our members in the discharge of their duties, be assimilated to the apostolic plan; or whether, through carnal policy or careless indifference, there be a departure from the simplicity of the gospel, and an opposition instead of a resemblance to the original exemplar?

The great objects of a Christian church being the mutual edification of its members and the dissemination of divine truth—objects very diverse from state policy, worldly aggrandizement, the acquisition or distribution of honour and emoluments—a multiplicity of offices would be evidently superfluous. And the spirituality of the kingdom of Christ, forbidding useless rites, pompous ceremonials, and ostentatious exhibition, requires only such officers as are necessary for the preaching of the gospel, the administration of divine ordinances—which under the Christian economy are distinguished by their fewness and their simplicity—and the administration of its internal affairs.

One office only, besides that of the pastor, appears in the primitive model, it is that sustained by *deacons.* And these two offices meet all the wants of a Christian community; the one having more immediately the supervision of its spiritual, and the other of its temporal, concerns. Without deacons, no church can be completely organized; with them, in addition to the pastorate, no other office is needed. In some forms of Christianity incorporated with the state, the deacon's office has been strangely perverted; and transformed into a clerical order of inferior grade, having nothing to do with the secular concerns of the church, which are devolved on others, and having no necessary connexion with any church or congregation. It may not, then, be thought superfluous, especially in the peculiar circumstances of the present times, if we examine somewhat more minutely the nature and extent of this office.

The primary meaning of the verb from which this name of office is derived is to *serve*, to *wait upon*;* and it appears to have especial reference to that department of domestic economy which superintends and provides for the arrangements of the table, and gives the attendance necessary to its comfort and order. From this restricted signification of one particular mode of serving, the term appears to have acquired by use a more extended application, referring to service of any kind, performed either by a superior or an inferior. In this latitude of signification we often meet with it in scripture, applied to magistrates, to the apostles of Christ, to the agents of Satan, to the Saviour himself, and to Christians in general in the performance of any act of service to each other. From the circumstances which originated a peculiar department of service in the Christian church, corresponding

* διακονεω.

with the primary sense of the term, the officers which were appointed to discharge its duties were designated deacons. An attention to these circumstances, as they are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, will assist us in forming a just view of the office to which they gave rise.

Among the number who believed on the Saviour and joined the church at Jerusalem, after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and another abundant effusion recorded in the fifth chapter of the apostolical church history, were many who were "poor in this world," though "rich in faith." There were also probably many foreign Jews who had come up to the feast, and who remained at Jerusalem with the church to which they were united, for further instruction and establishment in the faith. The persecuting spirit which appeared for a time appeased by the crucifixion of the Redeemer, was again roused into action by the boldness with which the apostles preached, and the success which attended them, and they probably anticipated what soon after took place, a general dispersion of the church through the determined hostility of their persecutors. The hearts of the disciples were filled with holy joy, their bosoms glowed with celestial love, the purest and most fervent charity prevailed amongst them; everything conspired to elevate their affections to "things above," and to diminish, in their view, all worldly distinctions and all earthly good. Many of the more wealthy sold their possessions for the benefit of the community, and all cast in liberally to one common fund; so that virtually, to a considerable extent, they "had all things common." And this was the result of no law, was enforced by no authority, but was the spontaneous movement of minds deeply affected by the truths of the gospel, and imbued in a more than ordinary degree with its charities. For a season, it seems, the apostles, who, in addition to their extraordinary office, discharged, in the first church, the duties of pastors, had the management of this fund, the care of the necessitous, and the distribution of the church's bounty. The pressure of so many demands on their time and labour produced serious inconvenience, and complaints were heard of neglect and partiality. The apostles, therefore, whose object was not power but usefulness, promptly assembled the church, stated the disadvantage that must ensue if their attention was to be distracted by cares of this kind, requested them to select a certain number of approved individuals from among themselves who should undertake this department of service, which being done, they were, in the usual solemn manner, inducted to their office by prayer and laying on of hands. This arrangement, thus made under the guidance of the inspiring Spirit, was not only satisfactory to the whole community of believers, but produced such a division of labour and concentration of effort as were attended with increased prosperity to the church. The spirit, the intention of the office thus insti-

tuted, was evidently this, *to place in the hands of approved persons, members of their own community, all those temporalities of the church which would interfere with the pastoral duties of the ministers of the gospel.*

But was this only a temporary arrangement, arising out of a peculiar emergency, or was it intended to be a permanent office in the Christian church? You may, brethren, be surprised that such a question should be raised; but what point of evangelical doctrine or church government may not be disputed when it militates against a favourite scheme? As the question, however, has been raised, it will not require, we conceive, much time or attention to arrive at a satisfactory decision.

It does not militate against the general importance or permanence of this office, that it originated in a peculiar emergency. In this way the most valuable institutions of civil society take their rise, and many of the appointments of God, under the Mosaic, and under the Christian economy, were originated in a similar manner. Offices were in general created as occasions occurred which showed their necessity. If the reason of any office no longer exists, then we may safely conclude the office itself ceases; but if the reason for its institution is of a permanent character, the office, we may fairly infer, is intended to be perpetuated. The reason of the apostolical office terminated with the lives of the apostles; they have no official successors. The reason of the ministerial office is of perpetual force; the office itself is accordingly permanent. And that the reason stated for the institution of that office to which the seven first deacons were appointed, as recorded in the sixth chapter of the acts of the apostles, is of a permanent character, is too obvious to require argument to prove it. In every Christian community, there are, and always will be, concerns of two kinds or classes, the *one* referring especially to the ministry of the word, the dispensation of divine ordinances, and whatever relates to the spiritual edification of the church; the *other*, embracing the management of its funds, and the care of the temporal necessities of its members. These distinct duties must either be discharged by one official character, or be distributed into appropriate offices. Both reason and scripture say separate them. To attend to both would distract the mind of an individual, and too much divide his attention. "It is not reason," said the apostles, "that we shoud leave the word of God and serve tables." The church, therefore, were directed to look out from among themselves a suitable number of approved members, whom the apostles set over that business, that they might give themselves "continually to prayer and the ministry of the word." Though the lapse of time, and the difference of national usages have considerably modified those circumstances from which the emergency first arose, yet the same reason still exists, and always will exist, why the temporal affairs of a Chris-

tian community should be managed by those who are not occupied by pastoral duties, or, in other words, should be entrusted to the care of deacons.

That the office of deacon, in conjunction with that of bishop or pastor, as two distinct offices for the government of the church, and the only two which the apostles recognized, continued in Christian communities, appears sufficiently evident from the apostolic writings. Twenty or thirty years after the appointment of the seven deacons at Jerusalem, Paul, in addressing the church at Philippi, distinctly recognizes the two offices which we have mentioned, and specifies no other. He writes "to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are in Philippi," that is to the whole body of the church; and to its "bishops* and deacons," that is, to all who sustained office amongst them. And subsequently, in his epistle to Timothy,† this apostle, describing the qualifications of church officers, specifies the same precisely, and no more. We have every reason, then, to believe that these two offices, which the necessities of a Christian church require, continued to exist, embracing each its peculiar duties, the one the temporal, and the other the spiritual concerns of Christian communities, till "the mystery of iniquity" began to work, and that "falling away" from the simplicity and purity of the gospel commenced, which changed the whole face of the Christian church. Offices were then mutiplied to meet the increase of ceremonials, and those, the scriptural names of which were retained, no longer remained as they originally existed; ecclesiastical dignities were appointed, which became objects of ambition on account of the honour and emolument connected with them, and instead of the simple constitution of the primitive churches, a splendid hierarchy was gradually created, identifying itself with the state, usurping the most extensive authority and power, and becoming altogether "a kingdom—*of this world.*" When by the reformation of Luther, there was a partial breaking up of the old system, which had more or less corrupted and perverted all the institutions of Christianity, our fathers, dissatisfied with the incomplete reform of ecclesiastical abuses in England, withdrew from the newly modelled hierarchy, and endeavoured to construct their churches on the apostolical mode; with this view the deacon's office was restored to its original functions and primitive design, to relieve the pastors from those cares and duties which would interfere with the due discharge of their ministry.

If, to justify a departure from what we conceive to have been apostolic order, it were objected, that the term "deacon" does not occur in the account which appears so clearly to state the origin of the office, and that therefore the office could not be identified

* That these bishops, επισκοποι, are the same as elders, πρεσβυτεροι,—and pastors, ποιμενες, compare Titus, i. 5, 7; and Acts, xx. 17, 28.

† 1 Tim. iii. 5.

with that to which Paul subsequently alludes, it might be replied, that no one, whose vernacular language was that in which the account was written, could, it is presumed, make such an objection, as the term in the form of a verb, and of a noun of office, does occur; and it is merely the difference of structure in the Greek and English languages which occasions its absence in our translation. If the name of the *office-bearer*, then, does not occur, the name of the *office** does, and in addition, a circumstance which must, we think, remove all doubt, the duties which devolve on the the office and the reason of its appointment are stated. Nor is it possible, if this account of the institution of the deacon's office be rejected, to gain from the scripture any knowledge of its origin, or of the duties which belong to it.

We think, Christian brethren, this is a fair and scriptural statement of "*the* NATURE *of the deacon's office*," an office which was intended by the great Head of the church for its permanent advantage; we shall now briefly enquire into its *extent*.

This office, we conceive, obviously embraces the superintendence of all the pecuniary concerns of a Christian community, and of whatever does not fall under the spiritual duties of the pastoral charge. It was indeed a specific department of affairs of this kind which first led to the institution of the office in question, but the reason assigned, and the object proposed, appear plainly to be of a more general nature, and to take in a wider scope. It was, that ministers of the gospel might not by other cares be obliged, in any measure, to "leave the word of God," but that they might be left at full liberty to "give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word," that is, exclusively to the discharge of the spiritual functions of their office. It is an especial duty of the deacon's office to care for the poor of the flock in their pecuniary difficulties, and to see that the bounty of the church be duly applied, affectionately and without partiality, to its necessitous members. The existence of parochial funds, levied on all without distinction, and raised expressly for the relief of the poor, might seem to render this part of the deacon's office unnecessary, but facts prove that it is otherwise. The slender pittance doled out by these guardians of the poor is but intended to preserve them from starvation, and in some cases scarcely does this; while the indiscriminate multitude of paupers who apply for relief, many of them personally unknown to the parish officers, and the many impositions that are practised by the idle and the worthless, often produce an insensibility of feeling and sternness of manner quite incompatible with Christian charity, and the alms thus raised by compulsion, and distributed without kindness, are received without any feeling of gratitude. The poor of Christ's flock must not be left to the mercies of such an officer; some attention must be paid to their

* διακονια.

comfort, as well as their absolute necessities; and ill do those deacons discharge their office, who allow the needy and industrious poor to pine in want through their neglect, either of ascertaining where necessities exist, or of application to those more wealthy members who are able, and we believe in most cases willing, to add to the comforts of their necessitous brethren.

But there are other temporalities which require the deacon's care. It is ordained by a wisdom which none can question that "they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." There are circumstances, undoubtedly, in which a pastor is justified in ministering to his own necessities, by the labour of his hands or of his head. In such cases it is his honour, and not his disgrace, that he is found supplying the church's lack of service. But, generally speaking, no man that engages in this holy warfare should unnecessarily "entangle himself in the affairs of this life." The voluntary support of the ministry by those who love the gospel is a divine appointment, and, when properly observed, attended with most beneficial consequences to the churches themselves, to ministers who labour in the word and doctrine, and to the interests of pure and undefiled religion." To see that those who are labouring for the spiritual welfare of the flock be not deficient in temporal comforts, is the appropriate duty of the deacon's office. Every feeling of delicacy, and every sense of propriety, will prevent a pastor from advocating his own claims on the liberality of his people; and judicious and considerate deacons will take care that this shall not be necessary. Much of the comfort and the respectability of a minister, as it relates to this world, will always depend on the punctuality, the prudence, the delicacy, and the liberality of the deacons.

To provide for whatever expenses attend the public worship of God, and the administration of divine ordinances, equally devolves on the deacons. In a word, to them it belongs to preside over all the temporalities of the church, to collect and apply its funds, and, in every way in which it may be requisite and practicable, to relieve the minds of pastors from cares which might obstruct the performance of the appropriate duties of their office.

Still it must be remembered that theirs is not an irresponsible office. They are the stewards of the church; and as they are appointed by the church, so they are accountable to it, and the manner in which the pecuniary means entrusted to their care are managed, must always be subject to the approval of the community for which they act. Nor will it be supposed that the deacon's office, especially in the greatly altered state of society in which we live, forbids that occasional distribution of alms which in so many cases may render pastoral visits additionally acceptable. How soothing and delightful must it be to the kind heart of a faithful pastor to be able, not only to apply spiritual conso-

lation, but also at the same time to aid the temporal comfort of the poor of his flock. Judicious deacons, and even the more wealthy members of a community might, in this way, without burdening the mind of a minister with cares foreign from his office, increase his usefulness and add to his pleasures.

Besides the more immediate duties of their office, deacons are capable, from their intermediate station between the pastor and private members, of being of important service to both. The qualifications which are scripturally required in deacons, must render them highly adapted to assist in many ways both minister and people. Holding an office so prominent in the Christian church, they must not only be competent to transact business of a pecuniary kind, with correctness and prudence, but they must also be distinguished for general excellence and high Christian attainment. They must, according to the requisites stated by the apostles at the first institution of the office, be known to the church for their wisdom and spirituality; and, according to the farther particulars into which the apostle Paul enters, they must be persons of steady and honourable conduct, unstained by the vices or follies of the age, circumspect in words and actions, temperate in their enjoyments, liberal in their dispositions, who combine a sound and comprehensive knowledge of scripture truth with a conscientious deportment, and who by their gifts and their graces, their zeal and their steady consistency, have commended themselves as well known and tried characters to the choice of the church.* Such persons, therefore, must be highly capable of assisting a minister by their advice in the general government of the church, and to support him in any emergency which might render the interposition of the weight of their station and influence necessary. Men thus distinguished by prudence and piety will be far from usurping dominion over a church, or assuming a tone of dictation towards their pastor; and very inconsiderately would that minister act, who would not gladly avail himself of the counsel and aid of friends so valuable. In deacons thus qualified every member of the church will find a friend and guide. Without any encroachment on pastoral duties, they will be able materially to assist the minister, by giving counsel to the perplexed, comfort to the mourner, and timely admonition to those whom they see going astray. They will, indeed, be able to render efficient service, in the admission of members, in enforcing the discipline of the church, and in the administration of the whole of its concerns.

That the preaching of the gospel, the administration of divine ordinances, and the presidency of the church, belong to the pastor, we need not, brethren, inform you. But though preaching is no part of the deacon's office as such, if he possess gifts, there is nothing in the nature of his office which should prevent him

*1 Tim. iii. 8—13.

from occasionally preaching and teaching the kingdom of God. We say *occasionally*, because the regular discharge of the Christian ministry would be obviously incompatible with due attention to the duties which devolve on a deacon. Stephen, one of the first deacons of the church at Jerusalem, was an eloquent defender of the faith of Christ, and though not a pastor, was honoured in being the first martyr to the truth of the gospel, and was enabled, with his dying breath, to proclaim the glories of the Saviour. Philip, the same, we have reason to believe, as is mentioned as one of the first deacons, went, after the church was dispersed by violent persecution, to Samaria, and preached Christ to them. He also was sent as an instructor to the Ethiopian eunuch, and upon a confession of faith, administered to him the ordinance of Christian baptism. This, however, does not appear to be an official act as deacon, but rather as an "evangelist," or Christian missionary, to which office, though the circumstance is not mentioned, it is probable that he was subsequently set apart.

There is a case of not uncommon occurrence, when for a time the general superintendence of the church devolves necessarily on the deacons. The bishop or pastor may be removed by death or otherwise, and in this destitute condition, when the highest office is vacated, the presidency of the church naturally falls to those who sustain the office next in order. To them, in such circumstances it seems naturally to belong, in addition to their ordinary duties, to see that the pulpit is supplied, and to bring before the church whatever is necessary in the administration of discipline, in the selection of a pastor, or in the affairs of the church in general, to be determined by the whole community on whose behalf they act.

From the view which we have taken of the nature and extent of the deacon's office, it will appear, Christian brethren, to be an institution highly adapted to promote the welfare of a church, comporting exactly with the unostentatious simplicity of the gospel, and, with the pastoral office, completing that organization which the Divine wisdom saw necessary to accomplish the great objects of Christianity. And highly favoured is that Christian community, which possesses deacons distinguished by those qualifications which the scripture requires. On these the happiness and the usefulness of a pastor very much depend. With the judicious and diligent discharge of the duties of their office, the order, the peace, and the prosperity of a church are closely connected. It was immediately after the choice of those seven wise and holy men, mentioned in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the consequent united efforts of both them and the first ministers of the word, and the union and peace which attended it, that, we are informed, "the word of God increased, and the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem."

What, then, "*is the duty of churches towards such officers?*" This is the only remaining branch of our inquiry. As these officers are selected from the most approved of the church members, and by the church themselves, expressly for the discharge of certain duties, it must be incumbent on all the individuals of the community to give them their *cheerful co-operation*, whenever and in whatever cases it may be necessary. To place any persons in office, and to withold from them that aid without which that office cannot be duly discharged, is evidently most unreasonable. It is unnecessary to mention in detail the cases in which assistance may be rendered to those who sustain office in the Christian church; it may suffice that they should always be encouraged by the assurance that they have the cordial concurrence of their brethren, and may rely on their aid whenever it is required. And especially in pecuniary matters, it should be a point of conscience not to place difficulties in the way of collecting the requisite funds, to occasion them unnecessary labour, or to pain their minds by any indications of reluctance or dissatisfaction.

A candid interpretation of their official conduct is also a duty owing to them. A captious spirit will never be at a loss for an occasion of blame; and the highest human wisdom can scarcely so act, where a number of persons may be concerned, as never to fall under the suspicion or provoke the censure of those who are ready to mark or imagine a fault. We beseech you to remember, Christian brethren, that your officers have the highest claim on your confiding regards. First, they are persons of tried worth and Christian character among you; and next, they were not imposed on you by any foreign authority, but were chosen by yourselves as the most eligible to discharge the office which they now fill. If you should in any case differ from them in opinion, at least give them credit for their motives. If explanation be necessary, let it be sought and given in a Christian spirit; but do them not the injustice to suppose, on slight grounds, that, in the administration of the concerns entrusted to their care, they act arbitrarily or capriciously, with prejudice or partiality. What can be more painful to an upright and honourable mind, or more galling to a kind and generous spirit, in the attempt to render gratuitous service to others, than to meet with unworthy suspicions instead of generous confidence, and a censorious captiousness, or querulous dissatisfaction, instead of a candid recognition of the sincere and benevolent intentions by which he is actuated.

A *respectful deference* to the judgment and opinion of those who are chosen by the church to fill the office of deacon is due to their station. There is a Christian courtesy which is due to all, and especially to those who are called to preside over any part of the concerns of the Christian church. The same divine writings which teach us that in the church all "are brethren," remind us

that we should render "honour to whom honour" is due. We are not, brethren, claiming for those who fill this honourable station among you a servile submission of your judgment, and a sacrifice of the right of private opinion; but it would be distressingly inconsistent if any member, above all if any junior member, should treat the advice or opinion of church officers with anything like scorn, or levity, or disrespect. It is impossible that the concerns of any community can be carried on with peace and order, if a proper degree of attention be not paid to those who are appointed to superintend them.

Permit us also to remind you, that those who undertake this office and conscientiously discharge its duties, *are entitled to the gratitude of the church for their disinterested services.* The only reward which they can expect is the approbation of their Divine master, and the consciousness that they are, to the best of their ability, promoting the interest of his church. They receive from you, brethren, no emolument; their valuable time and their best attention are given gratuitously; they seek not yours but you. They are surely, then, entitled to a grateful recognition of their services. Less you cannot give—more, they neither desire nor expect.

You will not, therefore, withhold from your deacons your *affectionate regards and fervent prayers.* Theirs is "a work and labour of love," and they, as well as your ministers, should be "esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake." And it will very much encourage them in the performance of their various duties, to know that they have a place in your hearts, and are remembered in your supplications.

And in conclusion, allow us to say to you, dear and honoured brethren, who sustain the important office of deacons in the churches of our Redeemer, that it is our earnest desire and prayer, that you may be guided by Divine wisdom in the discharge of your office, that you may have the gracious presence of our Redeemer, with the comfort of an approving conscience, cheering you under all the difficulties connected with your station; that having "by using the office of a deacon well purchased to yourselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith," you may each, when entering into the rest of the church above, hear the voice of him "whose you are and whom you serve," saying unto you, "well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And now, brethren, with fervent prayers for your peace and prosperity, and earnestly hoping that the next association may bring, to those who may survive and be present at its services, a very large measure of joy and gratitude in the review of the year which is before us, we "commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus."

MINUTES OF THE ASSOCIATION,

HELD AT MANCHESTER, IN THE BAPTIST CHAPEL, GEORGE-STREET, ON JUNE 9th & 10th, 1835.

On Tuesday morning, June 9th, the Ministers and Messengers met to arrange the preliminary business of the Association.

Two P. M. After the usual devotional exercises, Brother Aldis was chosen Moderator, and the letters from the Churches were read.

Six P. M. Brother Whitewood, of Halifax, commenced by reading the scriptures and prayer. Dr. Steadman preached from 2 Thess. iii. 1, and Brother Godwin read the Circular Letter, "On the nature and extent of the deacon's office, and the duties of church members towards them."

Wednesday, Six A. M. A prayer meeting. Brother Harbottle presided, and several brethren engaged in prayer.

Ten A. M. Brother Fisher read the scriptures and prayed. Brother Godwin preached from Dan. ii. 34, 35, 44, 45, and Brother Stephens from Acts xx. 19, the former part of the verse. Brother Edwards, of Bacup, concluded in prayer.

The meeting for business was then held. It was resolved,—

1. That the Circular Letter drawn up by Brother Godwin be adopted and printed.

2. That the next Association be held at Sutton, in Craven, on Tuesday and Wednesday in the Whitsun week. Brethren Lister, Dyer, and Harbottle to preach.

3. That the subject of the next Circular Letter be "The importance of a Christian spirit to the prosperity of a church," and that Brother J. Crook write it.

4. That in future, instead of a double lecture in the forenoon of the second day, one of the brethren appointed shall preach in the evening of that day; and that two of the preachers shall be chosen by the Association, and one by the church.

5. That while we believe that the union of Church and State is contrary to the principles of the New Testament, and that the dissolution of this connexion would be highly beneficial to the interests of genuine Christianity, we are of opinion that the first step of the legislature fairly to meet the claims of the Dissenters should be the passing of a law for the civil registration of births, marriages, and burials, applicable to all classes of His Majesty's subjects.

6. That this Association having, by a Sub-committee, investigated the case respecting the chapel at Haslingden, withdraws from all religious connexion with its former pastor, James Starkie.

Letters having been read from the Secretaries of the Baptist Union in London, and also from the Secretaries of the Baptist Building Fund in London, to this Association,—Resolved,

7. That a Sub-committee be appointed to consider the purport of these letters, to correspond, if judged necessary, with the writers of them,—to draw up a report thereon to be submitted to this Association, at its next Annual Meeting; and that the following brethren do constitute the said Sub-committee, viz. Dr. Steadman, Messrs. R. Godwin, J. Acworth, and the brethren who were united with them as Messengers, (from the Leeds and Bradford churches), to this Association.

8. That the thanks of the Association be given to Dr. Steadman, for his services as Secretary, and that Mr. Harbottle be requested to act as Secretary for the future.

9. That the church at Heywood be received into the Association.

N.B. The writer of this letter has to apologize to the churches for the delay which has taken place in printing it. Having public engagements in London and other places, immediately after the close of the Association, it was several weeks before he returned home. And then it appeared that the resignation of the late Secretary, no one had taken officially the minutes of the Association. After considerable difficulty, and a correspondence of many weeks, they have been at length obtained, it is hoped, with tolerable accuracy.

STATE OF THE CHURCHES SINCE THE LAST ASSOCIATION.

No.	CHURCHES.	PASTORS.	Added by			Lost by				Number at present.
			Baptism	Letter	Restored	Death	Dismiss.	Within	Exclud.	
1	Accrington	Harbottle	16	1	1	4	3		2	191
2	Bacup 1st Church	Edwards	4			4	1		4	142
3	Do. 2d Church		15			1	1	1		64
4	Barnoldswick	Spencer	15	1		2			1	73
5	Bingley	Taylor								No Letter
6	Bolton	Fraser	21	1		2	1			59
7	Bradford 1st Church	Steadman	18	1		13			7	283
8	Do. 2d Church	Godwin	6			2	1			143
9	Bramley	Colcroft	10	2		1	1		2	144
10	Burnley	Griffiths	5	1						62
11	Chapelfold	Facer								No Letter
12	Cloughfold	Heyworth				1	1		2	40
13	Colne	W. P. Scott	5	1		2	2		6	96
14	Cowling Hill	Walton	6	2						47
15	Earby	Wilkinson								No Letter
16	Farsley	Foster	5			3	2		3	94
17	Gildersome	Scarlett								No Letter
18	Halifax	Whitwood	9	4	1				1	98
19	Haslingden George St.									30
20	Haworth 2d Church	M. Saunders	6			1	3			68
21	Heaton									No Letter
22	Hebden Bridge	J. Crook	5	4		3				111
23	Heywood	T. Harbottle								26
24	Hornforth	Yeadon	13				1			100
25	Idle	Pearson								No Letter
26	Inskip	Blakey	25			1		1	1	58
27	Keighley	Nichols	3	1		1				70
28	Leeds	Acworth	34	3		10				237
29	Liverpool 1st Church		9	4		5	2	2	2	160
30	Do. 2d Church	Lister	9	10		5	5		3	215
31	Do. 3d Church	Fisher	11	1		2	2		1	122
32	Lockwood	Dyer	15		1	1				77
33	Lumb	Ashworth	6	1						54
34	Manchester	Aldis	19	6		4			6	115
35	Masborough		1							21
36	Meltham	Thomas	1			1				47
37	Millwood		4			2			1	33
38	Mirfield	Albrecht								No Letter
39	Ogden	Allison	3			2			4	51
40	Oldham 1st Church	Steele	13	3		2				66
41	Do. 2d Church	Abbot	3					1		20
42	Pendle Hill		6	3		1		1	1	58
43	Pole Moor	Holmes	5			1			1	83
44	Preston	Giles	18	1			1		5	60
45	Rawden	Hughes	8				1			74
46	Rishworth	Mellor	5							39
47	Rochdale	Stephens	5	1		1	2			99
48	Salendine Nook	Hyde	5			3	2		1	163
49	Sheffield	Larom	28	1		5				140
50	Shipley	P. Scott	9			1				166
51	Slack Lane		1	1						35
52	Staley Bridge	Morell	31		2		1			85
53	Steep Lane	Shaw				2				40
54	Sutton	Marsh	34				2			84
55	Wainsgate	Holroyd				3	3			56
56	Wigan 1st Church	G. Cheek	1			1				40
57	Do. 2d Church	Millard		2						21
			371	56	5	93	37	6	58	4368

Decrease..... 189 | Increase..... 532 | Clear increase..... 343

191
9
182
21
203